

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****[I.D. 021600B]****Notice of Availability of Final Stock Assessment Reports**

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of completion and availability of revised marine mammal stock assessment reports; response to comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS has incorporated public comments into revisions of marine mammal stock assessment reports (SARs). The 1999 revisions of the reports are now complete, and copies of the final 1999 SARs are available to the public.

ADDRESSES: Send requests for printed copies of reports to: Chief, Marine Mammal Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226, Attn: Stock Assessments.

Copies of the regional reports may also be requested from:

Anita Lopez, Alaska Fisheries Science Center (F/AKC), NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE BIN 15700, Seattle, WA 98115-0070 (Alaska);

Richard Merrick, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water St., Woods Hole, MA 02543 (Atlantic); and

Tim Price, Southwest Regional Office (F/SWO3), NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213 (Pacific).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Eagle, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, at (301) 713-2322, ext. 105, Anita Lopez (206) 526-4045, regarding Alaska regional stock assessments; Tim Price, (562) 980-4020, regarding Pacific regional stock assessments; or Richard Merrick, (508) 495-2311, or Steven Swartz, (305) 361-4487, regarding Atlantic regional stock assessments.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 117 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) required NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to prepare stock assessments for each stock of marine mammals that occurs in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States. These reports must contain information regarding the distribution and abundance of the stock, population growth rates and trends, estimates of

annual human-caused mortality from all sources, descriptions of the fisheries with which the stock interacts, and the status of the stock. Initial reports were completed in 1995.

The MMPA also requires NMFS and FWS to review these reports annually, or every 3 years for non-strategic stocks, and revise them if the status of the stock has changed or can be more accurately determined. These updated reports represent the 1999 revisions of reports for which NMFS is responsible.

Draft 1999 SARs were made available for a 90-day public review and comment period on May 28, 1999 (64 FR 29000). Prior to release for public review and comment, NMFS subjected the draft reports to internal technical review and to review by regional Scientific Review Groups established under the MMPA. Following the close of the comment period, NMFS revised the reports as needed to prepare final 1999 SARs. Printed copies may be obtained by request (see **ADDRESSES**).

Response to Comments

NMFS received one comment on the 1999 draft SARs. The affected report was revised to reflect the following response.

Comment: The draft report ignores a significant new analysis of Western North Atlantic right whale mortality and population growth, recently published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Response: The findings regarding right whale survival in the referenced article were incorporated into the final 1999 right whale SAR. Specifically, the decline in crude survival probability is referenced in the Current Population Trend, and Potential Biological Removal sections. Further, these findings will be incorporated into future revisions of the right whale report and used in the estimation of maximum net productivity for this stock.

Dated: March 2, 2000.

Art Jeffers,

Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****[I.D. 022900D]****New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a 2-day public meeting on March 22 and 23, 2000, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 22, 2000, beginning at 9 a.m., and Thursday, March 23, at 8:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Tavern on the Harbor, 30 Western Avenue, Gloucester, MA 01930; telephone (978) 283-4200. Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Wednesday, March 22, 2000**

After introductions, the meeting will begin with reports on recent activities from the Council Chairman, Executive Director, the NMFS Regional Administrator, Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, and representatives of the Coast Guard, NMFS Enforcement and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Following reports, there will be consideration and approval of a schedule of Council management actions for 2000, including approval of modifications to the joint fishery management plan development process. The Research Steering Committee Chairman will review recent committee activities including the development of groundfish research priorities, and cooperative efforts with NMFS to fund collaborative research through recent Congressional appropriations. The Spiny Dogfish Committee will review the results of the joint Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC)/New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting concerning the 2000-2001 annual specifications for the spiny dogfish fishery, the conclusions of the MAFMC/NEFMC Joint Spiny Dogfish Committee meeting, and the subsequent recommendations of the full MAFMC on the management of spiny dogfish. Following receipt of this information, the Council will consider and approve